

9 TAOIST BOOKS ON THE ELIXIR

A Short Bibliography

compiled by Fabrizio Pregadio

Golden Elixir Occasional Papers — No. 1



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Golden Elixir Press

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“There’s never been a Divine Immortal who hasn’t read a book”

未有神仙不讀書

(Taoist saying)

Golden Elixir Press

Mountain View, CA

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Revised 2014

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Introduction

This bibliography contains the main data on nine important original texts of Taoist alchemy. I have included two texts on Waidan 外丹 (External Alchemy) and seven texts on Neidan 內丹 (Internal Alchemy). In addition to their importance and renown, I have chosen texts for which at least one translation in a Western language is available.

Each entry contains:

- Title in Chinese, and translation
- Information on author and date
- A synthetic description
- References to print editions of the Chinese text
- Links to online versions of the Chinese text
- Translations into Western languages (with links to relevant Web pages, if available)
- Main reference works, both in print and online

Please note the following details:

Taoist Canon. References to volumes of the *Zhengtong Daozang* (Taoist Canon of the Zhengtong Reign-Period, 1445) are to the Xinwenfeng reprint (Taipei, 1977). The corresponding PDF files derive from the Wenwu chubanshe reprint (Beijing, 1987). The texts are the same, but the volumes are arranged in a different way.

Online Chinese texts. The texts available from the website of the Minglong gong in Taipei (www.ctcwri.idv.tw) are said to be based on the *Zhengtong Daozang* (1445), but in fact derive from scans of the *Zhonghua Daozang* (Taoist Canon of China, 2003). They contain errors.

Translations. These data are provided for information only. I do not particularly endorse or recommend any of the translations listed here.

Google previews. Links to the Google previews of printed books are given for reference only. I cannot guarantee that the specific pages cited in the bibliography are available for viewing.

Reference works (in print). In addition to those mentioned here, the nine texts are discussed in many other Western-language works. I have selected three main reference works in print, and have given references (where available) only to those three works.

Reference works (online). When available and known to me, I have added links to online reference works. Not all these online materials are entirely reliable. English translations found in the Daoist Culture Centre Database are often problematic.

Links to web pages provided in this bibliography were functioning in December 2014.

For a bibliography of works on Taoist alchemy in Western languages, please refer to:

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, *Chinese Alchemy: An Annotated Bibliography of Works in Western Languages* (Golden Elixir Press, 2009), available in print and PDF. [[Web page](#)]

Fabrizio Pregadio
April 2011
revised December 2014

1. Jiudan jing

Jiudan jing 九丹經 (Book of the Nine Elixirs).

Anonymous, originally 2nd century CE. Now found in the first chapter of the *Huangdi jiuding shendan jingjue* 黃帝九鼎神丹經訣 (Instructions on the Book of the Divine Elixirs of the Nine Tripods by the Yellow Emperor), with a commentary dating from the 7th century.

This is earliest Waidan (External Alchemy) text to be entirely extant. It describes the methods for making nine elixirs, paying much attention to the ritual background (purification rules, ceremonies, invocations to the deities, etc.). It is important to understand the context from which the later Waidan and Neidan traditions evolved.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏:Vol. 31 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏:Vol. 18 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translation

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*, pp. 159-87 (Stanford University Press, 2006). [[Web page](#) — [Google Preview](#)]

Online selections

- [Rituals](#) — [Methods](#) — [Benefits of the elixirs](#)

Reference works

- Kohn, Livia, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, p. 173 (Brill, 2000). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 588-90 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 378-79 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)

When you want to compound the Divine Elixirs you should dwell in the depths of a mountain, in a wide moorland, or in a place deserted and uninhabited for endless miles. If you compound them among other people you should stay behind thick, high walls, so that nothing can be seen between the inside and the outside. Your companions should not number more than two or three. First undertake the purification practices for seven days, and increase your purity with ablutions and the five fragrances. Do not pass by filth and dirt, or by houses where mourning is being observed, or by houses inhabited by women of the age of marriage. . . . When you compound the Divine Medicines, beware of intercourse with common and dull people. Do not let the envious, those who talk too much, and those who do not have faith in this Way hear or know about it. If they do, the compounding of the Divine Medicines would not be successful.

* * *

Place the crucible over a fire of horse manure or chaff for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire, and place the crucible over a fire of charcoal for nine days and nine nights. Extinguish the fire, let the crucible cool for one day, and open it. The Medicine will have entirely sublimated, and will adhere to the upper part of the crucible. It will be similar to frost and snow. Brushing with a feather, collect it, and add to it equal quantities of Grease of Dragons, and of Celestial Male (aconite) from Mount Shaoshi.

After ingesting a speck of this elixir for thirty days, a chick will grow wings and become a flying immortal. The ten thousand gods will become your attendants and offer protection, and the Jade Women will be at your service. The divine immortals will welcome you, and you will rise to Heaven.

Translations quoted from *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*

2. Baopu zi

Baopu zi neipian 抱朴子內篇 (Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Spontaneous Nature).

Ge Hong 葛洪 (283-343), ca. 320.

An overview of Taoist teachings, popular beliefs, and miscellaneous methods and practices current in the 3rd-4th centuries. Written by a member of the aristocracy who had been initiated into Waidan (External Alchemy) and was sympathetic toward this and many of the subjects he discusses, but was not a master of any of them. His descriptions include many quotations from now-lost texts; they are unsystematic, but valuable. Chapters 4 and 16 are especially concerned with Waidan. Note that while Ge Hong has been called “the greatest Chinese alchemist”, he states twice in his work that he had not performed the methods he had received.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏: Vol. 47 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏: Vol. 25 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translations

- Che, Philippe, *La voie des Divins Immortels: Les chapitres discursifs du Baopuzi neipian* (Gallimard, 1999). Includes chapters 1-3, 5, 7-10, 12, and 20.
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, *Ko Hung: Le Medicine della Grande Purezza. Dal “Pao-p’u tzu nei-p’ien”* (Edizioni Mediterranee, 1987). Includes chapters 1, 4, 11, and 16-19. [[Google Preview](#)]
- Ware, James. 1966. *Alchemy, Medicine and Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P’ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p’u tzu)* (M.I.T. Press, 1966; repr. Dover Publications, 1981). Complete translation, very useful but not always reliable.

Online selections

- [A few passages](#) translated by F.P.

In everything pertaining to Nourishing Life, one should listen much but incorporate the essential, look wide but choose the best. One cannot rely on one's bias to a single practice. Moreover, the danger is that those who devote themselves to one of these practices trust only their discipline of choice. Those who know the arts of the Mysterious Woman and the Pure Woman say that one can transcend the world only through the arts of the bedchamber. Those who are expert in breathing say that one can extend the number of years only through circulation of breath. Those who know the methods for bending and stretching [their body] say that one can avoid aging only through *daoyin*. Those who know the methods based on herbs and plants say that one can surpass any limit only through medicines and pills. When the study of the Dao does not bear fruit, it is because of biases like these.

* * *

It is clear that if the present-day coarse and rustic practitioners do not obtain the great methods of the Golden Elixir, they will not obtain a long life. They may be able to heal illnesses and bring a dead person to life again, to abstain from cereals and be free from hunger for many years, to summon gods and demons, to be sitting at one moment and then rise up and disappear, to see one thousand miles away, to reveal the rise and fall of what is obscure and hidden, and to know the fortunes and calamities awaiting what has not yet sprouted. All this, however, will be of no advantage to increase the length of their life.

Translations quoted from *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*

Reference works

- Kohn, Livia, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, pp. 166-68 (Brill, 2000). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 215-17 and 442-43 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 71-72 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#)
- Wikipedia (Baopu zi): [Chinese](#) — [English](#)
- Wikipedia (Ge Hong): [Chinese](#) — [English](#) — [French](#)

3. Cantong qi

Zhouyi cantong qi 周易參同契 (Token for the Agreement of the Three According to the *Book of Changes*), often abbreviated as *Cantong qi* 參同契.

Traditionally attributed to Wei Boyang 魏伯陽 (2nd century CE); actually written—or at least, completed in its present form—by anonymous authors a few centuries later.

The most important source of Taoist alchemy, both Waidan (External) and Neidan (Internal). A beautiful, fascinating, and difficult text, almost entirely written in poetry. Its three main subjects are: (1) The Dao and its relation of the cosmos; (2) The way of “non-doing” (*wuwei*); (3) The way of alchemy. The whole text, however, may be read in the light of Neidan, and most commentaries have interpreted it from this perspective, even though Neidan did not yet exist at the time it was written.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏: Vol. 31 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏: Vol. 16 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translations

- Bertschinger, Richard, *The Secret of Everlasting Life: The First Translation of the Ancient Chinese Text of Immortality* (Element, 1994). A translation of the “Ancient Text” (*guwen*) version, with selections from several commentaries. (The “Ancient Text” consists in a rearrangement of the standard version, and—despite the name—dates from the 16th century.)
- Pregadio, Fabrizio. *The Seal of the Unity of the Three: A Study and Translation of the Cantong qi, the Source of the Way of the Golden Elixir* (Golden Elixir Press, 2011). [[Web page](#)]
- Wu Lu-ch’iang and Tenney L. Davis, “An Ancient Chinese Treatise on Alchemy Entitled *Ts’an T’ung Ch’i*.” *Isis* 18 (1932): 210-89. An early and truly pioneering translation, followed by notes that quote comparable passages from the literature of Western alchemy.
- Zhou Shiyi, *The Kinship of the Three* (Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988). Includes a glossary and an index.

Online selections

- [Translations and other materials](#) from *The Seal of the Unity of the Three*

Reference works

- Kohn, Livia, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, pp. 466-68 and *passim* (Brill, 2000).
[[Google Preview](#)]
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 1289-92 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 323-31 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)
- Wikipedia: [Chinese](#) — [English](#) — [French](#)

“Qian ☰ and Kun ☷ are the door and the gate of change,”
the father and the mother of all hexagrams.
Kan ☵ and Li ☲ are the inner and the outer walls,
they spin the hub and align the axle.
Female and male, these four trigrams
function as a bellows and its nozzles.

* * *

Enfolding and encompassing the Way of Yin and Yang
is like being an artisan and a charioteer
who level the marking-cord and the plumb-line,
hold the bit and the bridle,
align the compass and the square,
and follow the tracks and the ruts.

* * *

Innerly nourish yourself,
serene and quiescent in Empty Non-Being.
Going back to the fundament conceal your light,
and innerly illuminate your body.

“Shut the openings”
and raise and strengthen the Numinous Trunk;
as the three luminaries sink into the ground,
warmly nourish the Pearl.
“Watching, you do not see it” —
it is nearby and easy to seek.

* * *

“Superior virtue has no doing”:
it does not use examining and seeking.
“Inferior virtue does”:
its operation does not rest.

* * *

This is not the method of passing through the viscera, of inner contemplation and having a point of concentration;
of treading the Dipper and pacing the asterisms, using the six *jia* as markers of time;
of sating yourself with the nine-and-one in the Way of Yin, meddling and tampering with the original womb;
of ingesting breath till it chirps in your stomach, exhaling the pure and inhaling the evil without.

* * *

Mysterious and obscure! Subtle and remote!
Separate are they, and yet they are bound.
In due measure they nurture the seed
that is the origin of Yin and Yang.
Vast and broad! Vague and indistinct!
No one knows its beginnings.
“Going ahead of it brings on delusion” and you lose your track,
“go behind it,” and you are a ruler and a lord.

Translations quoted from *The Seal of the Unity of the Three: A Study and Translation of the Cantong qi*

4. Longhu jing

Longhu jing 龍虎經 (Book of the Dragon and Tiger).

Anonymous. Traditionally deemed to be the celestial scripture that inspired the composition of the *Cantong qi*. The present text dates from the Tang period (7th/8th century). It consists of a paraphrase of about one third of the *Cantong qi*, and rephrases its verses into alchemical language.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏: Vol. 34 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏: Vol. 19 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translation

- Wong, Eva, *Harmonizing Yin and Yang: The Dragon-Tiger Classic* (Shambhala, 1997). [[Google Preview](#)] Often inaccurate, to be used with much caution.

Reference works

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 701-2 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 704-5 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)

5. Zhong-Lü chuandao ji

Zhong-Lü chuandao ji 鍾呂傳道集 (Anthology of Zhongli Quan's Transmission of the Dao to Lü Dongbin).

Traditionally attributed to Shi Jianwu 施肩吾 (fl. 820-35), probably written in the tenth century. An exposition of the doctrines of the Zhong-Lü tradition of Neidan, immediately prior to the Southern Lineage (Nanzong). Very influential, also due to the renown of the two immortals featured in this work, who later were placed at the origins of both the Southern Lineage and Quanzhen Taoism.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏: In *Xiuzhen shishu* 修真十書 (Ten Books on the Cultivation of the True, chapters 14-16), vol. 7 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏: Id., vol. 19 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translation

- Wong, Eva, *The Tao of Health, Longevity, and Immortality: The Teachings of Immortals Chung and Lü* (Shambhala, 2000).

Reference works

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 1279-80 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 801 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)

Lü Dongbin said: Longevity depends on refining and achieving the Golden Elixir. To refine the Golden Elixir, one should first collect the Yellow Sprout; and to collect the Yellow Sprout, one should first obtain the Dragon and the Tiger. It is said, "The True Dragon emerges from the palace of Li ☲, and the True Tiger emerges from the position of Kan ☵; within Li and Kan there are Water and Fire." What are Water and Fire?

Zhongli Quan said: The places within the human body that have names based on water are so many that I cannot list all of them: Four Seas, Five Lakes, Nine Rivers, Three Islands, Flowery Pond, Torquise Pond, Windy Pond, Celestial Pond, Jade Pond, Inchoate Pond, Original Pool, Lofty Garden, Divine Water, Golden Waves, Jasper Liquor, Jade Source, Yang Milk, and White Snow. The places within the human body that have names based on fire, instead, are only Sovereign Fire, Minister Fire, and Subject Fire. These three fires have their foundation in Original Yang, and generate the True Breath. When the True Breath accumulates, one obtains tranquility. When the True Breath weakens, one develops illnesses. If the True Breath disperses, the Original Yang is lost; and when the Original Yang is exhausted, the True Yin is formed and the Original Spirit leaves the body. This is called death.

Translation by F.P. (unpublished)



Zhongli Quan (right) and Lü Dongbin (left).

6. Wuzhen pian

Wuzhen pian 悟真篇 (Awakening to Reality).

Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (987?-1082).

The second most important source in Taoist alchemy after the *Cantong qi*, and the most important text entirely composed from the perspective of Neidan. Written in poetry, and containing several references and allusions to the *Cantong qi*. Its author was placed at the origins of the Southern Lineage (Nanzong) of Neidan more than one century after his death. Several Neidan lineages in the Ming, Qing, and modern periods claim to derive from the teachings of this work.

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正統道藏: Vol. 4 [[PDF 1](#) and [PDF 2](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中華道藏: Vol. 19 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translations

- Cleary, Thomas, *Understanding Reality: A Taoist Alchemical Classic* (University of Hawaii Press, 1987). Complete translation, with Liu Yiming's commentary.
- Crowe, Paul, "Chapters on Awakening to the Real: A Song Dynasty Classic of Inner Alchemy Attributed to Zhang Boduan (ca. 983-1081)." *British Columbia Asian Review* 12 (2000): 1-40. Translation of the "Regulated Verses." [[Online version](#)]
- Davis, Tenney L., and Chao Yün-ts'ung, "Chang Po-tuan of T'ien-t'ai, his *Wu Chên P'ien*, Essay on the Understanding of the Truth: A Contribution to the Study of Chinese Alchemy." *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 73 (1939): 97-117. Complete translation.
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, *Awakening to Reality: The "Regulated Verses" of the Wuzhen pian, a Taoist Classic of Internal Alchemy* (Golden Elixir Press, 2009). Translation of the "Regulated Verses." [[Web page](#)]

Robinet, Isabelle, *Introduction à l'alchimie intérieure taoïste: De l'unité et de la multiplicité. Avec une traduction commentée des Versets de l'éveil à la Vérité*, pp. 205-54 (Éditions du Cerf, 1995). Complete translation.

Online selections

[Introduction](#) — [Poem 3](#) — [Poem 7](#) from *Awakening to Reality* (Golden Elixir Press)

Reference works

- Kohn, Livia, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, pp. 476-77 and *passim* (Brill, 2000). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 1081-84 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 812-24 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Wikipedia: [Chinese](#) — [English](#) — [French](#) (Zhang Boduan)

If you study immortality,
you should study celestial immortality:
only the Golden Elixir
is the highest principle.
When the two things meet,
emotions and nature join one another;
where the five agents are whole,
Dragon and Tiger coil.

Rely in the first place on *wu* and *ji*
that act as go-betweens,
then let husband and wife
join together and rejoice.
Just wait until your work is achieved
to have audience at the Northern Portal,
and in the radiance of a ninefold mist
you will ride a soaring phoenix.

* * *

You should know that the source of the stream,
the place where the Medicine is born,
is just at the southwest —
that is its native village.
When Lead meets the birth of *gui*,
quickly you should collect it:
if Metal goes past the full moon,
it is not fit to be savored.

Send it back to the earthenware crucible,
seal it tightly,
then add the Flowing Pearl,
so that they are match for one another.
For the Medicine to weigh one pound
the Two Eights are needed;
regulate the fire times
relying on Yin and Yang.

* * *

Three, Five, One —
all is in these three words;
but truly rare are those who understand them
in past and present times.
East is 3, South is 2,
together they make 5;
North is 1, West is 4,
they are the same.

Wu and *ji* dwell on their own,
their birth number is 5;
when the three families see one another,
the Infant coalesces.
The Infant is the One
holding True Breath;
in ten months the embryo is complete —
this is the foundation for entering sainthood.

Translations quoted from *Awakening to Reality: The
"Regulated Verses" of the Wuzhen pian, a Taoist Classic of Internal Alchemy*

7. Zhonghe ji

Zhonghe ji 中和集 (Anthology of Central Harmony).

Li Daochun (fl. ca. 1290).

A compendium of writings in prose and poetry, edited by Li Daochun's disciples. One of the most important and most accessible overviews of Neidan among those that consist of original teachings (as distinguished from anthologies of writings by different authors). Li Daochun is often deemed to be one of the masters who grafted the teachings of the Nanzong (the Southern Lineage of Neidan) into those of Quanzhen (the Northern Lineage, or Beizong).

Chinese text

- Zhengtong Daozang 正统道藏: Vol. 7 [[PDF](#)]
- Zhonghua Daozang 中华道藏: Vol. 27 [[DJVU](#) — [HTML](#)]

Translation

- Cleary, Thomas, *The Book of Balance and Harmony* (North Point Press, 1989; repr. Shambhala, 2003). Partial translation. Omits Chinese sentences found in the text, and adds English sentences not found in the text.

Reference works

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 1282-83 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Schipper, Kristofer M., and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang*, pp. 1174-75 (Chicago University Press, 2004).
- Kohn, Livia, ed., *Daoism Handbook*, p. 480 (Brill, 2000). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Daoist Culture Centre Database: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)

Ding'an asked: When the Golden Elixir is achieved, can it be seen?

Li Daochun replied: Yes, it can be seen.

Ding'an asked: Does it have a form?

Li Daochun replied: No, it has no form.

Ding'an asked: If it has no form, how can it be seen?

Li Daochun replied: "Golden Elixir" is only a name used out of necessity: how can it have a form? When I say, "it can be seen," it cannot be seen with the eyes.

* * *

The Mysterious Barrier is the utterly mysterious and utterly essential mechanism. Many present-day students get stuck to the physical body. They say that it is between the eyebrows, or in the wheel of the navel, or in the space between the kidneys, or "before the kidneys and behind the navel," or in the gallbladder, or in the Cinnabar Field. Sometimes they point to the Gate of Birth (the vagina) as "the place where one is generated," or to the mouth and the nose as the Mysterious-Female. This is all wrong.

If it is only located in the physical body, it is entirely incorrect. However, it cannot be separate from one's own person and searched outside it. Why does no scripture on the Elixir say where it is found? [Because] it is difficult to be expressed by writing or speaking; this is why it is called Mysterious Barrier. Therefore the sages showed it only by the single character *zhong* 中 ("center"), since only this character elucidates the Mysterious Barrier. This Center it is not the center of "internal and external"; it is not the center of "the four directions and above and below"; and it is not the center that is within.

* * *

Refining Essence lies in knowing the time. "Time" does not mean the time of the hours; if you are attached to that time, it is wrong. But if I said, "There is no time", how could you set to practice? At the end, what would you do? The ancients said: "When the time comes, Spirit knows". And our Patriarch said: "When Lead meets the birth of *gui*, quickly you should collect it". These words say all that needs to be said.

Translations by F.P. (unpublished)

8. Taiyi jinhua zongzhi

Taiyi jinhua zongzhi 太一金華宗旨 (The Ultimate Teachings on the Golden Flower of the Great One; known in the West as *The Secret of the Golden Flower*)

Anonymous (often attributed to Lü Dongbin). An important and influential text, known especially for its description of the practice of “reversing the light” (*huiguang* 回光).

Chinese text

- Zangwai Daoshu 藏外道書: Vol. 7 [[PDF](#)]

Translations

- Cleary, Thomas, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: The Classic Chinese Book of Life* (Harper, 1992).
- Wilhelm, Richard, and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962; many reprints).

Reference works

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 961-62 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Wikipedia: [Chinese](#) — [English](#)

When we reverse the Light, all the Yin and Yang Breaths of Heaven and Earth coagulate. This is what we call “refining thought,” “purifying Breath,” or “purifying thinking,”

According to the instructions to begin the practice, Non-Being seems to be within Being. In due time, when the practice is completed and outside one's body there is another body, Being is born within Non-Being.

The Light is true only with one hundred days of focused practice: at that time, it becomes the Spirit-Fire (*shenhuo*). After one hundred days, the Light spontaneously coalesces, and the one particle of True Yang suddenly generates the Pearl, sized as a grain of millet. This is just like when husband and wife conjoin and there is an embryo. In order to attend to it, you must be in a state of quiescence. The reversion of the Light is the same as the Fire Phases (*huohou*).

Translation by F.P. (unpublished)

9. Writings by Liu Yiming

Daoshu shi'er zhong 道書十二種 (Twelve Books on the Dao)

A collection of works by Liu Yiming 劉一明 (1734-1821), containing original works and commentaries to earlier texts. Liu Yiming's writings are characterized by a focus on the spiritual dimension of Neidan and by a clear language. His works are one of the best starting points for the study of Neidan.

Chinese text

- *Daoshu shi'er zhong* (Huguo an 護國庵, Changde 常德, 1819). Several later editions.

Translations

A major work by Liu Yiming, the *Xiuzhen houbian* 修真後辨 (Further Discriminations on the Cultivation of Reality) is translated in:

- *Cultivating the Tao: Taoism and Internal Alchemy*. Translated by Fabrizio Pregadio (Golden Elixir Press, 2013). [[Web page](#)]

Several other works by Liu Yiming have been translated by Thomas Cleary. While his translations are not always faithful to the original texts (they omit or simplify several passages), Cleary deserves credit for bringing this great master to the attention of Western readers.

- *Awakening to the Tao* (Shambhala, 1988). Translation of the *Wudao lu* 悟道錄 (Records of the Awakening to the Dao).
- *Energy, Vitality, Spirit: A Taoist Sourcebook* (Shambhala, 1991). Includes Liu Yiming's commentary to the *Yinfu jing* 陰符經 (Book of the Hidden Accordance) and two other short works.
- *The Inner Teachings of Taoism* (Shambhala, 1986). Translation of the *Jindan sibai zi* 金丹四百字 (Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir, attributed to Zhang Boduan) with Liu Yiming's commentary, and of another work by Liu Yiming, the *Xiangyan poyi* 象言破疑 (Smashing Doubts on Symbolic Language).

I advice my companions on the Way: Establish an enduring commitment and maintain a steady mind; remove errant thoughts and give prominence to the undertaking of Nature and Existence; inquire into the principles of creation and transformation with an unwavering mind. Advance by removing one layer after the other: when you remove one layer, continue to the next one until you finally reach the inner core of the Dao. Then you will be able to see that all the dust of this world is a precious jewel. Rambling at will, you will go anywhere you like, and everywhere will be the Dao. Entirely awakened and entirely realized, you will move without obstructions.

Why should you fear that you will not fulfill your Nature and your Existence? Why should you fear that you will not achieve the Great Dao?

Translation quoted from [Liu Yiming, *Cultivating the Tao: Taoism and Internal Alchemy*](#)

The Taoist I Ching (Shambhala, 1986). Translation of Liu Yiming's commentary to the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes).

Selections from Liu Yiming's commentary are also found in:

- Fabrizio Pregadio, *Understanding Reality. A Taoist Alchemical Classic* (University of Hawaii Press, 1987). Translation of the *Wuzhen pian* 悟真篇 (Awakening to Reality), with selections from Liu Yiming's commentary. [[Web page](#)]

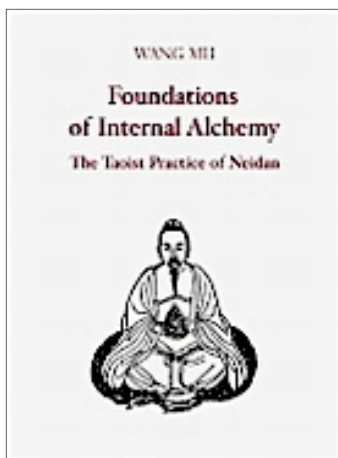
Online selections

- [Chapter 4, chapter 6, chapter 16, chapter 19](#) of *Cultivating the Tao* (Golden Elixir Press)

Reference works

- Pregadio, Fabrizio, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, pp. 331-33 and 690-91 (Routledge, 2008). [[Google Preview](#)]
- Wikipedia: [English](#)

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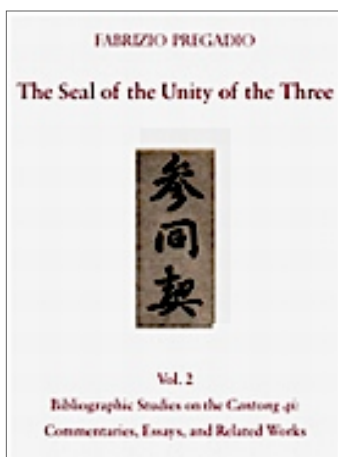


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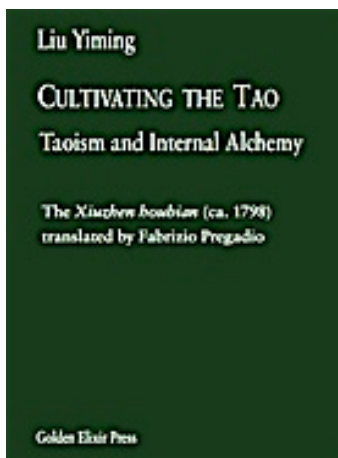
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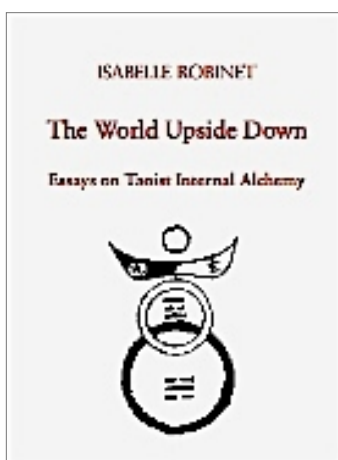


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Liu Yiming (1734-1821)

Cultivating the Tao
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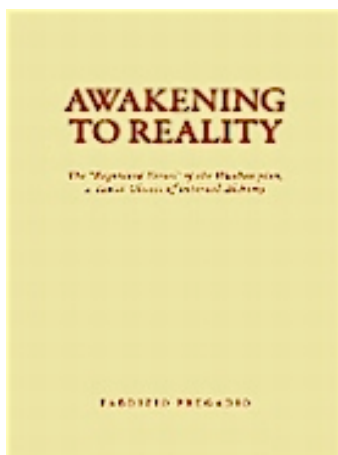


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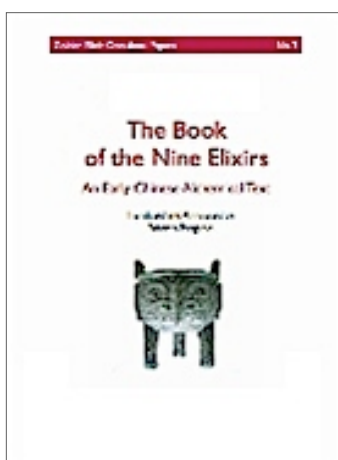


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Originally written in the 10th century, the *Ruyao jing* (Mirror for Compounding the Medicine) describes the foundations of Internal Alchemy in 20 short poems of four verses. This book contains the first complete translation of the text and of the commentary by Wang Jie (14th century).



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